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# Establishing the Context for Climate Change Adaptation



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by Saleem Janjua

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Saleem Janjua writes "For developing-country local governments to start any climate adaptation actions, it is important to secure a high level commitment from local leaders....Once the vision for climate adaptation action in local governments is formulated by the political and public-sector local leadership and understood by the staff as well, strategies to adapt to climate change can then be developed easily."

Saleem Janjua is the Climate Change Adaption contributor to the NAPSNet Weekly Report, and the Editor of AdaptNet.

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## II. ARTICLE BY SALEEM JANJUA

### Establishing the Context for Climate Change Adaptation

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Initiating climate adaptation action in developing-country local governments should not be visualised only through a technological lens (concerning new local urban infrastructure, transfer of technology, urban structural modifications). Whereas a technological approach may be essential to successful adaptation at a later stage, it will not be useful without first establishing the context and a supportive organisational environment for adaptation. I do agree that analysing and managing climate-related risks in local government context will entail a sophisticated technological and methodical knowledge, contrarily adaptation efforts would be incommensurate to the risks - either inadequate or over planned. However, I also consider that building up the institutional capabilities through learning and prudent policy making for climate adaptation actions are equally important in developing-country local governments for utilising and transmitting words into deeds. Therefore, establishing the context for climate adaptation in local governments should be considered as one of the fundamental adaptation actions itself, entitled to be given all due consideration.

I consider that for developing-country local governments to start any climate adaptation actions, it is important to secure a high level commitment from local leaders (e.g. administrators and/or elected representatives) by declaring that adaptation is one of the primary needs to their local governments. A strong local adaptation leadership and vision is required to outweigh the administrative hurdles and risk aversion, particularly related to the multifaceted developing-country management issues that split various organisational authorities. Also, in most of developing-country local governments, conflicting goals and enmities of stakeholders can also restrain inter and intra-departmental harmonisation required for designing and implementing pragmatic climate adaptation actions. Therefore, the most effectual and realistic means for practicing that leadership in local governments should come from increasing their capacity for local governance itself, and putting together climate adaptation into their local level planning and developmental programs and actions.

Strong local leadership with a clear vision has also shown to be essential in the initiation of climate adaptation actions in various local areas throughout the world. Therefore, I consider that the vision for climate adaptation in the context of developing-country local governments could be based on three interlinked guiding principles: (1) adaptation activities in local governments are planned on the basis of learning from current past climate inconsistency and extreme events;(2) adaptation activities in local governments are strongly connected to the development processes, and planned within the on-going local level planning and development programmes; and (3) adaptation activities in local governments are taking place at different scales within the local governments. Once the vision for climate adaptation action in local governments is formulated by the political and public-sector local leadership and understood by the staff as well, strategies to adapt to climate change can then be developed easily. Hence, the presence of a visionary leadership is crucial for the creation of adaptation initiatives to climate change at the local government level in developing countries.

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